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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to increase the lines of positive and effective communication between parents and teachers in a preschool setting. Poor parent-teacher communication (due to lack of knowledge or experience) was documented. The program sought to improve communication regarding the child's developmental and personal progress. The 8-month program consisted of staff meetings, six cooperative parent-staff workshops, monthly newsletters, and parent participation in school programs. Implementation topics included academic appropriateness, developmental landmarks, discipline, Montessori philosophy, self-esteem, and stress. Evaluation (based on observation, feedback, topic review, and a survey) showed that providing parents and staff a joint educational experience in the form of a workshop increased their knowledge base and enhanced the parent-teacher relationship and communication between home and school. Parents and staff increased their ability to communicate comfortably and effectively about children's issues. (Four appendices contain surveys and topic reviews. Contains 18 references.) (TM)

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Improving Parent/Staff Communication through Cooperative Preschool Workshops

by
Cynthia M. Hall Reazor
Cluster 44

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A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY
1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Susan Pannabecker
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April 6, 1994
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This practicum report was submitted by Cynthia M. Hall Reazor under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 13, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

June S. Delano
June S. Delano, Ph.D., Adviser

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It is essential to first and foremost recognize Mae and Ron Hall, my parents, for their continuous inspiration, interest and support. This gratefulness also goes beyond to the special friends and colleagues who offered their time, services and support to the promotion of the school and its programs.

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ABSTRACT

Preschool Teachers and Parents Lacking Effective Communication Benefit From a Similar Knowledge Base When Participating in Cooperative Workshops. Reazor, Cynthia M. Hall., 1994. Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Child Care Givers/ Child Development/Day Care/Early Childhood Education/Family School Relationship/ Parent Attitudes/Parent Child Relationship/Parent Participation/Parent School Cooperation/Preschool Education/Program Implementation/ Teacher Attitudes

This practicum was designed to establish and develop a program to increase the lines of positive and effective communication between parents and teachers in a preschool setting. This would be achieved by having regular staff meetings and cooperative parent-staff workshops.

The writer administered a writer-designed survey, introductory and follow-up, as well as a writer-designed topic review. There were six workshops provided on topics which were determined by need based upon survey input.

Results indicated that providing parents and staff with a joint educational experience in the form of a workshop not only increased their knowledge base but also enhanced the parent-teacher relationship and lines of communication between home and school. Both parents and staff showed increases in their ability to communicate comfortably and effectively involving children's issues as well as successfully completing a topic review on the topics discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting is a low density residential area approximately 10 miles from the city and 60 miles from a major metropolis. Although the immediate surroundings consist of older homes, averaging approximately 50 years old, with two or more acres of land on winding roads as opposed to a more typical block neighborhood, the primary vein which connects these two aforementioned cities is less than a mile away. The nearby town center is one square mile with a population of approximately 4800 people. With the increase in families moving further away from the cities, the land has been rapidly developed with small businesses, strip malls, remodeled and expanded public schools, and housing expanding along the main route.

There is only one other established center within one half hour drive of the school outside of the city. The county furnishes a current-to-the-day list of Independent Family Day Care Homes and County Day Care Centers and

Preschools. Of the 99 Family Day Care Homes listed for the county only 4 are in the town which borders the school. In addition, this new preschool/day care has been identified as the first of the 56 county schools to be an affiliate of this town.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer serves as the owner, director, and a teacher in a center which was established in December 1991. The center has been rapidly growing and changing as the needs of the current parents and community became more visible. For example, the center initially only took children three years of age through kindergarten and has since evolved into a center which provides a preschool-kindergarten program as well as child care for infants/toddlers through school-age children.

Certification in Early Childhood Education, Elementary and Kindergarten Education, and Montessori - Instructional I, provide the necessary qualifications to be an effective owner in the director's position. Education, practical experience on each of the levels of certification, and most recently serving as director of an inner city private preschool/kindergarten for four years, which required designing and implementing curricular activities as well as hiring qualified staff, provided the background necessary for this undertaking as well as subsequent events.

The current center is on the first floor of a 122 year old farm house situated on a five acre tract of land in a low density residential area. The initial anticipated

population of the school was 15 children ranging in age from three year olds through kindergarten age. This figure was derived from the regulations allocating how many children are permitted per toilet facility. However, the school now works with approximately 20 families and over 20 children in various part-time and full-time positions. There are six staff members, three full-time, two part-time, and one substitute who are actively involved with the children.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In this particular setting the parents appeared to be unwilling to discuss matters with the director even when specifically related to their children's best interest. The staff were also not always available to discuss the children with the parents or even felt that they were the best person to do so. In addition, many staff members were posing questions to the director in reference to general areas of child growth and development which seemed to confirm their feelings of inadequacy in their ability to respond to a possible parent request for information as to the development of a particular child. For the most part, the education and communication of the parents and staff in relation to the children's needs were in need of improvement.

Specifically, parents and staff had questions about child development and issues which were not being properly investigated; therefore, such concerns did not

seem to be communicated with each other. There had been many situations where parents requested that their child be cared for in a certain way based on a neighbor's experience, or other situations, and were not willing to discuss alternatives.

One specific situation which would have been conducive to discussion was an instance where a mother was attempting to potty-train a two year old boy and the family physician told her to tell the day care that whenever the child had an accident he should not be allowed to play with the toys in the center. The mother was very adament about her wishes and there were staff who felt willing to comply with the doctor's advice. The director's concern caused confusion for both staff and the parent.

Similar responses were the result of a parent who, by her own volition, authorized the staff to swat her two year old child whenever she did not do as was instructed. When situations such as these present themselves it is imperative that they be discussed in a manner which does not insult yet is confident in its message that children need a positive nurturing environment. In brief, parents and staff did not have the knowledge or experience to communicate effectively about the children.

Problem Documentation

Evidence of the inability to communicate or to effectively and confidently express oneself, especially when the best interest of the child was a concern, was supported by observations, interviews, and a survey.

There had been numerous occassions when many parents had been observed asking their child or the director who their child's teacher was or pointing out a regular staff person and asking his/her name. This may have continued to occur after a child was attending the center for more than a month.

In addition, during individual staff-director and parent conferences, both the staff and parents repeatedly asked similar questions related to child development and expectations. It became obvious to the director that both parents and staff were often unsure of how to respond to or counteract individual children's daily problems or needs which, for the most part, may have been developmental in nature with repercussions which may impact later development.

Finally, as a result of a writer-designed Introductory Survey (see Appendix A) generated from topics brought up in conferences and conversation, both parents and staff indicated that they were uncomfortable with most areas of child development and/or wished to learn more about children's issues.

Causative Analysis

The writer believed that there were two general causes for the problem of the lack of effective communication. Primarily, limited experience with preschool children on the part of both the staff and parents caused hesitation and indecision. The inexperience in conjunction with a lack of an adequate and/or familiar resource or support system when questions or situations arose perpetuated the problem.

Specifically, in this particular setting, the staff were either first year teachers or aides who did not have appropriate positive experiences. The parents were generally inquisitive while freely soliciting advise and in turn appeared willing to accept everything they heard without regard to the source or its appropriateness for their particular child.

The initial survey revealed that half of the parents and staff felt somewhat comfortable in at least seven out of ten categories while the other half were uncertain to very uncomfortable in seven out of ten categories. Therefore, a significant number of people involved in this child care setting, who were molding and influencing the lives of small children, did not feel comfortable in understanding or expressing why they did or didn't do the things they chose to involve the children, nor did they have the resource base to properly further investigate their concerns.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Although experience had shown that many preschool settings varied due to the differences in communities as well as family structures, which may even vary from year to year, the underlying goal that children are the priority should be universal. To that end, other professionals have shared similar experiences when dealing with the relationships of parents and staff.

Parents and staff were not always able to communicate with each other effectively on a variety of topics for a variety of reasons. However, the

parent-caregiver relationship exchange is a critical element in the development of the child.

Kagan and Rivera (1991) refer to the parent-staff relationship as a "collaboration". Although education was not the pioneer field to recognize and apply the collaborative approach, it certainly is now a strong advocate especially with the integration of developmentally appropriate practice and mainstreaming. In addition, collaboration does acknowledge the uniqueness of each situation and that, in reality, there may be no "one best model" to follow. Collaborative efforts may be initiated through training or publicity, among others; however, regardless of the tactics, all children, not just those with special needs, are to be the priority.

Recognizing that staff-parent relationships are an ongoing issue, Galinsky (1988) explains how as favorable as it is to have positive staff-parent relationships that it is not unusual to also have tense and uncomfortable situations. A major key is to remember that parents are often in the center at rushed times, especially in the morning, and/or in the evening when they have not as yet unwound from their work day. Pollman & Weinstein (1983) found that generally "the only time parents see caregivers is when they are bringing or picking up their children." Keeping that in mind, as well as a lack of inside knowledge to most home lives, personal judgements should not be made by either staff members or parents. Many times the home and school may share similiar concerns and in the unfortunate situations where criticizing or complaining is occuring it may be acknowledged that the child must mean a lot for someone to care enough to verbalize concern.

The recurring theme is the importance of parent-staff communication in the early learning experience for the sake of the children. The preliminary literature review showed that Bundy (1991), Galinsky (1988), and Kagan and Rivera (1991) are all advocates of parent and staff communication in the early learning experience for the sake of the children. There is staff centered evidence found in other settings also revealed in the literature. The visibility and accessibility of staff aids parents and staff in forming a relationship and recognition.

Endsley and Minish (1989) indicate that more than half the time it is the staff member who initiates conversation with a parent. With that being the case, Turner and Zigler (1987) found that it was the parents who felt that they gained more from parent-staff conversations than did staff members. However, only approximately half of the parents felt that the preschool was a resource or a support system for guidance with child rearing.

Shimoni and Ferguson (1990) discuss that there is a high percentage of staff employed in day care centers who would not be considered "highly qualified professionals" (p.9); therefore, it is unlikely that the school could be considered a source for parent education. However, those centers with qualified staff should provide information and/or education and those centers without inhouse trained staff are probably still in a better position than parents, based on experience, to identify and make available the resources which would accommodate various needs. Caution must be given because Haskins (1981) describes a situation where it is believed that although parent education has

been provided the motive was more to "shift responsibility" from school to home than to actually inform or educate parents (p. 5).

Marvelle (1978) stresses that approximately 75% of what a child learns, he learns from home. In addition, 50% of their "measurable" learning occurs before age five (p. 15). Even with the awareness of the influence of the young child's home environment, Murphey and Alexander (1991) indicate that the majority of parents actions are more influenced by their emotional tone and what action of theirs elicits the desired response from their child. Whether it is actually thought to be developmentally, cognitively, or physically appropriate is seldom an issue.

This wealth of information for the parents of preschool children may also be readily applied to the staff with whom a child may in fact spend a majority of his waking hours. Endsley and Minish (1989) share that approximately 75% of preschool staff dealing with infants and toddlers do request additional information. However, Wilmshurst (1984) recognizes that instruction is often too theoritical or beyond their immediate needs and therefore does not accomplish its objectives or provide a staff with applicable approaches. In addition, another area which not only causes but perpetuates a problem is when the resources are not made available or not supported in a manner which is adequate and accessible to everyone.

Overall, similar information was relayed by Burgess (1977) and Gelfer (1991) who stressed that it is the parents who have the long range commitment to the child; therefore, if the child is to receive the most

effective educational experiences and future success the parents must be a part of the school environment. Turner and Zigler (1987) report that staff are generally more interested in promoting home school relations than are parents. They also reveal that staff who do not have a resource, support, or educational outlet have differing, somewhat "hostile", views on day care (p. 12). For example, staff who feel they are acting as a mother figure have a tendency to resent parents, those who view themselves as professionals felt parents did not support the educational program at home. Turner and Zigler (1987) specifically state, "a logical assumption is that negative staff attitudes toward parents may detract from the optimal development of children and interfere with the supportive potential of day care" (p. 15).

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of the writer was that parents and staff would be able to frequently and accurately discuss children's developmental and personal progress.

Expected Outcomes

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum. There were four outcomes which should have enhanced the preschool experience for all those involved as well as promote discussion.

Outcome 1 was that 18 out of 20 parents would show a more positive attitude about early childhood education and development by completing a Follow-up Survey (see Appendix B) identical to the Introductory Survey.

Outcome 2 required that all 6 staff members would show a more positive attitude about early childhood education and development by completing a Follow-up Survey (see Appendix B) identical to the Introductory Survey.

Outcome 3 would require 18 out of 20 parents to answer 16 out of 20 questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials.

Outcome 4 would require all 6 staff members to answer 18 out of 20 questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials.

Measurement of Outcomes

The leading sources of measurement for the expected outcomes were primarily based upon observation and feedback. One way of recording observation and unsolicited feedback was with a notebook which would account for both negative and positive input so that circumstances and events were not overlooked or taken for granted.

Outcome 1 measured parental attitude about early childhood education and development by having the parents complete a follow-up survey (see Appendix B) identical to the writer-designed introductory survey which asked parents to rate their comfort level relative to nine areas of child growth and development.

Outcome 2 required that all staff members would show a more positive attitude about early childhood education and development by completing the same follow-up survey (see Appendix B) as the parents.

The feedback from the introductory and follow-up surveys of both staff and parents will be represented in graph form (see Appendix D). By using identical surveys and representing the results in graph form the reader

should be more able to receive an immediate and more valid overview of the effectiveness of the program.

Outcome 3 required parents to answer 16 out of 20 questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials. The writer-designed review consisted of 20 true/false questions. The parents were asked to take a few minutes to complete the topic review individually at their parent conference.

Outcome 4 required all staff members to answer 18 out of 20 questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials. The staff received a review identical to that of the parents and were asked to complete the written review at their individual review meeting at which time it may also have been discussed.

All participants completed the same review; therefore, the reliability achieved from providing equal materials was gained. This was done in order to avoid the possibility that one review read easier than the other. Also, by having the staff and parents take a few minutes to complete the review at school asssured that the results were true of the participants current knowledge and recollection of shared information.

At the end of the workshop series the parents were requested to sign-up for individual conferences in order to follow-up on any additional needs or concerns. The staff were also expected to sign up in order to receive their mid-year review. A general anectdotal evaluation of the program and cooperation was compiled based upon

observation and notes from the ongoing journal notebook where miscellaneous notes and comments were recorded. At that time, if needed, additional outreach on behalf of the school was initiated for any parents who did not schedule a conference and/or requested supplemental information or guidance.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The problem being discussed was that parents and staff had questions about child development and issues which were not being properly investigated; further, such concerns were not communicated with each other.

The literature provided a number of solutions to the problem of parents and staff who had questions about child development and issues which were not being properly investigated. Parents and staff also did not have the knowledge or experience to communicate effectively about the children. One area of concern was the need for a positive atmosphere and interactive environment between staff and parents. Whitebook (1980) recommends beginning with enhancing the lines of communication among all staff and between staff and management. Policy areas which foster joint communication are job descriptions, breaks, and days off.

Bundy (1991) discusses how, for the most part, parents know their children best and care givers have greater experience in theoritical child development. Therefore, the way to foster communication is to pool their knowledge. Bundy acknowledges the difficulties which may be encountered when attempting "interactive communication". As an alternative, meetings, handbooks, handouts, newsletters, and school events are recommended. This is all stressed due to the strong belief that the child will in turn have the best possible preschool experience.

If onsight activities pose a problem there are always options. As an extension of the school, Gelfer (1990) advocates enhancing the home school bond with conferences and participating in the evaluation process as well as providing sources for home enrichment. However, McKinney (1980) encourages the parents to take the initiative and to participate in the school environment as volunteers. And, covering all approaches, Young (1980) believes that an obligation for parent involvement to some degree should be "mandatory" upon registering a child for care.

Cooperatively, Goodwin (1980) believes that parents can work with the school by participating in "planning fund-raising events, educational sessions for parents and providing input for policy and budget decisions" (p. 20). In addition, involvement activities with educational and/or informational programs for staff and for parents would be beneficial, resourceful, and supportive. Riley (1984) suggests providing opportunities for parents to become involved with policy and curricular

decisions and Rice (1982) proposes joint or shared parent-staff activities such as a Mother-Toddler Club, Pop-In Sessions, and Home Visiting Scheme.

The school should also make a concerted daily effort as Allen (1981) maintains, a staff person should be designated to greet and send children home daily. This will be enhanced with telephone contacts and individual parent conferences. As a supplementary and beneficial opportunity Rice (1982) and Rosenfeld (1978) promote a toys/materials lending library.

Education and information sharing for all concerned is a starting point and something which should become an integral aspect of any program. McKinney (1980) promoted workshops, specifically those educationally based. Goodwin (1980) offers suggestions for staff development in the form of "workshops, meetings, on-site consultations, demonstrations, etc." (p.17) and Haskins (1981) provides suggestions involving parent involvement, parent education, parent support, and parent intervention.

Bundy (1991), Galinsky (1988), and Kagan and Rivera (1991) indicate that for the most part, unless there was a specific problem, how or when workshops, involvement or participation transpires, in essence, is not as important as getting the parents to the school in order to enhance the home-school relationship in a supportive nonjudgemental environment. Workshops and/or resource staff are an asset in allowing both the parents and staff to express their concerns and feelings.

There are means available to help both parents and staff to use the school as a positive source of

information. Riley (1984) reported a number of cases where parents who were provided with parent involvement and/or parent education programs over a two year period applied this information when dealing with their children. Korn (1990) discussed that when parents and staff shared their knowledge base they were each more capable of supporting each other which in turn provides a more meaningful environment for the child.

Description of Selected Solution

In order to rectify the problem of the need for effective parent-staff communication, the writer had decided to work cooperatively and simultaneously with both staff and parents. However, as Allen (1981) suggests, the staff needs would be addressed immediately.

Bi-weekly staff meetings were arranged in order to establish and maintain communication among all staff as well as increase their internal support system. Daily work schedules were altered so that all staff members would have the opportunity to greet parents. The staff also received monthly info-letters related to the workshop or relevant topic. Most importantly, staff participated in monthly cooperative parent/staff workshops so that parents and staff joined together to share and learn, and all received the same information. Specifically, as Bundy (1991) advises, parents received monthly newsletters containing curricular and activity updates as well as program reports from each teacher.

In conjunction with the staff program, parents received identical monthly info-letters related to the

workshop or relevant topic. Parents were also specifically invited to participate in a school program. Such school programs may have been those in need of supplementary supervision or simply activities which were supported by additional adult input or feedback.

Finally, the parents were invited to participate in the cooperative parent/staff workshops. Workshops are highly recommended by Goodwin (1980), Haskins (1981) and McKinney (1980); however, it was Bundy (1991) who promotes cooperation and specifically Korn (1990) who, as previously mentioned, places immense strength and success in a shared knowledge base which provides encouragement for this joint cooperative venture.

The writer believed that these undertakings would work for a variety of reasons. The staff meetings were scheduled during school hours so that schedule conflicts were minimal to none. The parents already had an open communication and a positive relationship with the director which should have been an aid in extending the home school relationship to all staff who came in contact with the children. Workshops answered many questions in an informal setting for both staff and parents as well as increased opportunities for parents and staff to get to know each other. In addition, state law now mandates that staff receive 6 hours of training a year. These workshops were applicable for the state criteria and did not cost the employee additional funds nor cause them to travel unusual distances in order to complete the additional requirement.

Report of Action Taken

The implementation time line spanned eight months. Overall, a great sharing and learning process was experienced between staff and parents which strengthened the school and home unit.

Implementation began the third week of June 1993 after a time of intense planning. The eight month implementation revolved around six topics: academic appropriateness, developmental landmarks, discipline, Montessori philosophy, self-esteem, stress.

A sign was immediately posted reminding staff and encouraging parents to attend the Open House/Introductory meeting. During the first week, a staff meeting was held and was very informal promoting general conversation and sharing overall expectations. The first staff/parent meeting was geared as an Open House the following weekend. The final week of June into the first week of July was spent continuing to gather information and ongoing follow-up conversations. Verifying expectations of parents and staff was helpful in order to plan for the workshops to be interesting and enjoyable for all participants. Input was also needed in order to verify which night of the week was convenient for the majority of the parents and staff so that a meeting schedule could be established.

During the second month of implementation the second staff meeting was during naptime. The convenience of naptime meetings was possible since the three classroom areas are joined to an open common area. This allowed the staff to congregate while still having their children visible. The topic of academic appropriateness was touched

upon with an overview of materials and an outline which would be the basis of the parent/staff workshop. In addition, general staff conversation took place without an agenda in order to encourage open communication and conversation.

The following week a specific calendar plan, which was convenient for both parents and staff, was posted and verified so that the chosen staff/parent workshops would attempt to draw 100% attendance. This resulted in the third or fourth Thursday of every month as being workshop night. During the third week the first workshop was held on a Thursday evening at 7:00 pm. This workshop was on academic appropriateness with the overall goal that parents and staff would become familiar with what learning activities are recommended and/or appropriate for different age levels. Parents and staff were given workshop outlines which led to discussion and note taking. Much of the discussion involved understanding when a child should or could begin prereading activities, the importance of small and large motor development in conjunction with academic learning and when and how much help is appropriate. As a point of reference, the center's general approach incorporating whole language with art projects and minibooks were displayed and discussed.

The final week of July was geared to receiving a great many follow-up comments and concerns about the initial workshop. Parents with individual concerns involving Kindergarten children were directed to their respective school districts in order to reinforce concerns over requirememnts and philosophy.

During the third month, the first week of August was spent preparing for back-to-school while continuing to speak with eager parents regarding their child's reading potential and progress. The staff meeting involved distribution of the workshop outline and discussion on program development with a focus on the learning program and supplemental program activities. During this staff meeting it was decided to invite a pediatrician to the second workshop, which was on developmental landmarks, in order to add input when developmental landmarks are hindered by medical and/or physical disabilities. This was beneficial because inexperienced educators and/or parents are not equipped to diagnose and/or intervene without supplemental professional input.

During the third week a pediatrician was contacted, additional information was gathered, and a message was posted reminding parents of the following week's workshop with the invitation of the guest speaker. The overall goal of this workshop was to familiarize parents and staff with what changes to look for as their child grows and develops. Specifically, parents and staff were to become familiar with the overall general sequence of developmental landmarks, that children are individually different and will grow and change at varying rates, when there may be cause for concern and what precautions and channels to take.

The last few days of August into September involved workshop follow-up, growth charts were posted in every classroom and individual achievement charts were posted so that different tasks could be indentified and

listed by staff and parents and then marked and dated as completed. The second week of September was a staff meeting focusing primarily on how the developmental landmarks would affect children's advancement to the next class throughout the year as well as touching upon the Montessori materials and how they may be disseminated throughout the center. This meeting carried over for two afternoons due to lengthy conversations and interest. This Montessori interest was enhanced by the appropriateness of being Back-to-School week with the need to fully understand the Montessori philosophy for the upcoming school year. The third week involved general school organization since school was officially starting and the Montessori workshop.

The overall workshop goal was that parents and staff would become familiar with the Montessori method of education. Specifically, parents and staff became familiar with who Maria Montessori was and the theory as applied to the center. The participants had the opportunity to explore and experience the material themselves as well as the sequence of the materials and learning. Great interest in the available reading and text book materials generated the decision to develop a school library. The last week of September was spent removing supplies from a storage room, erecting shelves, and turning the area into a lending library.

The first week of October was a time for gathering and categorizing library materials as well as implementing some of the basic Montessori materials within the classroom. The staff meeting reviewed general Montessori methodology and touched upon discipline. This

meeting was not as productive as those in the past due to continuous interuptions with phone calls from inquiring parents for the new school year. During the second week a reminder was posted as well as another staff meeting. The topic of this supplemental meeting was based upon the desire of the staff to discuss concerns regarding individual children in the event specific behavioral concerns or situations were raised at the workshop.

The goal of the fourth workshop was for parents and staff to become familiar with appropriate and effective methods of discipline in order to generate positive behavior. Specifically, parents and staff became familiar with what strategies were appropriate for various behaviors, time out in particular. Discussion also included when to discipline and when to teach, in other words, they gained a better understanding of motive and/or intent. Overall, there were no uncomfortable or inappropriate situations raised regarding specific children or circumstances. In addition, a small portion of time, which was parent generated, was alotted in order to discuss holiday procedures. During the last week of October an increasing number of parents generated individual conversations and scheduled meetings after thought was given to disciplinary and behavioral options which were discussed and learned at the workshop.

During the first week of November, moving into the sixth month, was the staff meeting. This meeting was very general and simply touched base with the success of the Halloween program and the hopes and plans for the future holidays. Self-esteem issues and observations

regarding holidays were touched upon, however; nothing was specifically addressed although after free conversation and the realization that no one was actually totally comfortable with self-esteem issues a recommendation was made to invite a counselor to the workshop. The second week was rather uneventful and quiet other than contacting the counselor who was invited to give a more objective view to both parents and staff as to how their behaviors and comments influence a child's self-esteem. A reminder was posted and during the third week the workshop was held with the counselor in attendance. The goal of the workshop was that parents and staff became familiar with the importance of a child's self-esteem and how the actions of others may influence this development. Specifically, parents and staff understood what self-esteem is in young children, how their actions, or lack thereof, influences a child's self-esteem and how they may help to "boost" self-esteem in a young child.

The fourth week of November, which was a three day week, was nearly strictly devoted to Thanksgiving activities, with a great deal of parent participation. During the last week of November and the first week of December there were many parents who made the extra effort to speak briefly about the enjoyment they were having with the meetings and sharing of materials. Also, an increased number of parents offered to help and assist, wishing to participate more actively, especially with the coming holiday season.

The seventh staff meeting briefly discussed the appreciation in understanding why children may act and

respond as they do and how this can help to make the holidays more enjoyable and less stressful. There was also a suggestion made to invite the counselor to return to share the workshop on stress. A reminder for the workshop was also posted the following week and the counselor was invited to return for the workshop on stress. The workshop was held during the third week of December and the counselor led the session. The goal was for parents and staff to become familiar with stress in the lives of young children. Specifically, what causes stress, the warning signs to look for and ways to alleviate and eliminate stress for young children.

The fourth week was a four day week devoted to holiday celebrations and consistant parent participation. During the final week of December attendance was low and there was not much activity. During that week sign-up sheets were designed for staff and parent individual meetings.

During the first week of January 1994, leading into the the eighth month of implementation, an informal staff meeting was held. This meeting was reflective and touched upon hopes for future meetings which included following-up on many of the recently addressed topics. The sign-up sheets were posted encouraging parents to sign up for individual parent-teacher conferences as well as times for staff to have personal meetings with the director. The individual meetings were scheduled for the second and third week of January. At this time individual meetings were held with each staff member and the director as well as with every parent and their child's teacher with the

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director present. At each staff-director meeting the staff member would first take a few minutes to complete the Topic Review (see Appendix C) and at every parent-staff meeting the parent would do the same. After completing the Topic Review at the beginning of the scheduled meeting the parents then had the chance to speak privately and candidly to their child's teacher and the director about any specific concerns, needs, progress and development. The teacher and director meetings were similar with the opportunity for them to make a point of speaking candidly and openly with each other.

At the conclusion of each meeting the staff member or parent received a Follow-up Survey (see Appendix B) which they were welcome to complete at that time or return the next day. The fourth week of January was originally scheduled as a time to compile all of the collected surveys and reviews; however, weather problems caused many conferences to be rescheduled into February and the information not able to be collected until mid-month.

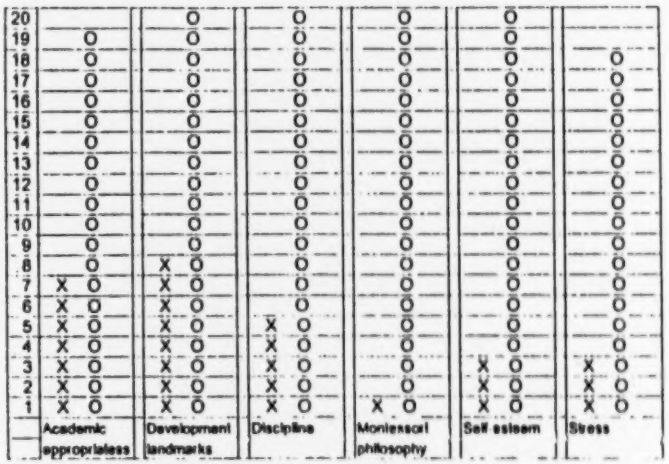
CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The original problem stated that there was a need for parents and staff to be able to frequently and accurately discuss children's developmental and personal progress. As a result, a program was designed to increase and enhance the parent staff relationship as well as familiarize and inform parents and staff about various areas of child development in a joint workshop setting.

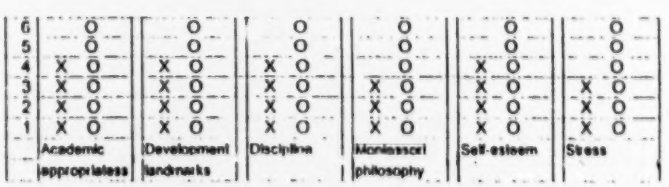
Outcome 1 stated that 18 out of 20 parents would show a more positive attitude about early childhood education and development by completing a Follow-up Survey (see Appendix B) identical to the Introductory Survey (see Appendix A). This was completed by each of the participants and all participants indicated more positive responses than their original Introductory Survey (see Table 1).



Graph depicts the number of parents who indicated that they were very or somwhat comfortable with a topic.
X - Introductory Survey Results
O - Follow-up Survey Results

Table 1. Parent Survey Results

Outcome 2 stated that all 6 staff members would show a more positive attitude about early childhood education and development by completing a Follow-up Survey (see Appendix B) identical to the Introductory Survey (see Appendix A). All 6 staff members did complete the Follow-up Survey and each indicated more positive responses as compared to their Introductory Survey (see Table 2).



Graph depicts the number of staff who indicated that they were very or somwhat comfortable with a topic.
X - Introductory Survey Results
O - Follow-up Survey Results

Table 2. Staff Survey Results

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Outcome 3 stated that 18 out of 20 parents would answer 16 out of 20 of the questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials. Consequently, 19 out of 20 parents achieved over 16 out of 20 correct on the Topic Review.

Outcome 4 stated that all 6 staff members would answer 18 out of 20 questions correctly on a topic review (see Appendix C) based on the workshops and hand-out materials. All 6 staff members did achieve 18 out of 20 correct.

Discussion

Each of the outcomes were met, the success of which is probably not only a result of the workshops but the conversations which were generated with applications to practical experience. In addition, there was evidence of continued and applied interest after the workshops as individuals initiated conversations, book browsing and supplemental workshop participation.

For the most part, the workshops themselves were focused on the discussion of the topics at hand. Personal concerns over individual children were generally raised during the week following the workshop or an occasional phone call.

Interest and enthusiasm on behalf of parents and staff seemed to increase throughout implementation. It was not unusual for staff members to find themselves voluntarily congregating and having very meaningful and supportive conversations about the topics at hand. Parents seemed to be gaining a better understand of why their

children behaved as they did and what they may be able to do to help. Most importantly, the cooperative relationships which were formed through paernt and staff participation in the workshops and increased parent participation during the school day resulted in more meaningful child oriented conversations. These conversations were overheard daily between parents and staff as well as personal commentary which lent itself to a greater increase in parent participation and involvement, especially during the holidays.

As early as the second month of workshops the parents organized a refreshment routine and seemed to genuinely look forward to workshops. All workshops had 100% attendance by staff and approximately 90% representation by parents, with any one family never missing more than one meeting.

Staff members have been seeking out course work at the local community college, not necessarily for credit but simply workshops for additional ideas and information. They are also using their experience to expand the library by collecting and purchasing materials. There have also been ongoing donations from staff and parents of old text books, magazines, new materials and a new section of children's books.

Overall, parents and staff do seem to be communicating more effectively and comfortably with one another. It is now not unusual for parents to telephone and request to speak directly to their child's immediate teacher and bypass the director. The teachers and staff, having shown themselves to become more fluent and

knowledgable in areas related to child growth and development, have become more able to communicate their thoughts and are more aware of the needs of the children.

Recommendations

Organization is an essential recommended element. Designing files on each of the topics discussed, as well as other areas of concern, is recommended in order to organize the already gathered material as well as provide a place to readily have access and store further finds. This process will aid in the second recommendation of continuing the meetings and workshops with additional topics or expanding upon the ones previously encountered with greater ease.

Another suggestion would be to design a simple chart or checklist for the monthly workshop sessions identifying each component: staff meeting, materials prepared, reminder posted, guest confirmed. This will give an at-a-glance overview of the planning and implementation of these programs.

Finally, the staff meetings were beneficial in building the relationship and support among the staff as well as share in school business; however, it would not be recommended that the staff receive a workshop outline at this meeting, prior to the workshop, especially since there was not to be extensive topic conversation until the workshop. The intent of the cooperative experience was for the parents and staff to learn and share together. Therefore, all participants should receive the outline in advance or, preferably, no one should receive the outline until the workshop.

Dissemination

The dissemenation of materials is being achieved in two ways at the moment. First of all, the newly founded library is providing continual access to materials and resources as well as an area for personal discussion. In addition, one family which consists of a parent educator and student-teacher has adapted this program to their educational setting and the director is assisting in the developing of a similar cooperative workshop series.

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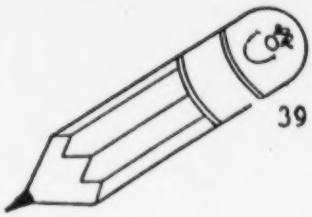
APPENDIX A
INTRODUCTORY SURVEY



SURVEY

PLEASE CHECK: ___ Parent ___ Staff NAME (optional):_____

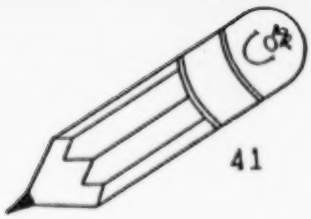
Please check the appropriate space that best conveys your feelings about how comfortable you are with each of the following areas relating to the children.

VERY	SOMEWHAT		UNCERTAIN	NOT AT ALL
		Academic appropriateness		
		Developmental landmarks (What should happpen when)		
		Discipline		
		Montessori philosophy		
		Multi-cultural education		
		Parent-Teacher Interaction		
		Play		
		Self-esteem		
		Stress		

Is there another area(s) or a specific one mentioned above that you are particularly interested in knowing more about?

APPENDIX B
FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY



PLEASE CHECK: ___ Parent ___ Staff NAME (optional):_____

Please check the appropriate space that best conveys your feelings about how comfortable you are with each of the following areas relating to the children.

VERY	SOMEWHAT		UNCERTAIN	NOT AT ALL
		Academic appropriateness		
		Developmental landmarks (What should happpen when)		
		Discipline		
		Montessori philosophy		
		Self-esteem		
		Stress		

Is there another area(s) or a specific one mentioned above that you are particularly interested in knowing more about?

Comments? Suggestions?

APPENDIX C
TOPIC REVIEW

Name _____ ____parent ____staff

TOPIC REVIEW

Please mark the following statments as being True (T) or False (F).

1. _____ When in Time-Out a child should sit for at least 3 minutes.
2. _____ Montessori materials are progressive in nature.
3. _____ Montessori materials are divided into two separate categories.
4. _____ A child who is misbehaving should remain in the situation in which he is misbehaving and shown how to deal with it.
5. _____ Parents and teachers view children differently due to environment.
6. _____ Parents should prepare a list of questions for conferences.
7. _____ Do not casually label a child in any way.
8. _____ Children need both positive and negative evaluations.
9. _____ Separation anxiety is strongest between 8 and 24 months.
10. _____ At child at 4 years of age should be able to tie shoes.
11. _____ A baby should roll over at approximately 5 months.
12. _____ Play gives a child a sense of power.
13. _____ Play assists in language development.
14. _____ A child should be shielded from stressful situations.
15. _____ Learning and play are two separate activities.
16. _____ Physical problems may be an indication of stress in children.
17. _____ Define a problem before you take action.
18. _____ Self-esteem does not begin to develop until a child is at least 3 years old
19. _____ Hitting or biting may be considered normal for the 2 through 4 year old child.
20. _____ A one year old child should be allowed to play with his food.

APPENDIX D
SURVEY GRAPH

SURVEY GRAPH

	Academic appropriateness	Development landmarks	Discipline	Montessori philosophy	Self-esteem	Stress
26		O	O	O		
25	O	O	O	O	O	
24	O	O	O	O	O	O
23	O	O	O	O	O	O
22	O	O	O	O	O	O
21	O	O	O	O	O	O
20	O	O	O	O	O	O
19	O	O	O	O	O	O
18	O	O	O	O	O	O
17	O	O	O	O	O	O
16	O	O	O	O	O	O
15	O	O	O	O	O	O
14	O	O	O	O	O	O
13	O	O	O	O	O	O
12	O	X O	O	O	O	O
11	X O	X O	O	O	O	O
10	X O	X O	O	O	O	O
9	X O	X O	X O	O	O	O
8	X O	X O	X O	O	O	O
7	X O	X O	X O	O	X O	O
6	X O	X O	X O	O	X O	X O
5	X O	X O	X O	O	X O	X O
4	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O
3	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O
2	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O
1	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O	X O

Graph depicts the number of parents and staff who indicated that they were very or somewhat comfortable with a topic.

X - Introductory Survey Results

O - Follow-up Survey Results

Note: The areas of multi-cultural education, parent-teacher interaction and play were not graphed since there was not a workshop scheduled on these areas during this implementation period.